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• SOCIAL JUSTICE FORUM

**Multicultural Competence,  
Social Justice, and Counseling Psychology:  
Expanding Our Roles**

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*The construct of multicultural competence has gained much currency in the counseling psychology literature. This article provides a critique of the multicultural counseling competencies and argues that counseling psychology's operationalization of multicultural competence must be grounded in a commitment to social justice. Such a commitment necessitates an expansion of our professional activities beyond counseling and psychotherapy. While counseling is one way to provide services to clients from oppressed groups, it is limited in its ability to foster social change. Engaging in advocacy, prevention, and outreach is critical to social justice efforts, as is grounding teaching and research in collaborative and social action processes.*

During the past decade, multicultural scholarship has become increasingly integrated into the literature that defines counseling psychology. This is a positive sign for the field and is in large part due to the sustained efforts of multicultural proponents who advocated to bring diversity issues into the forefront of counseling psychology. It is a sure sign of progress that we are no longer reading articles that argue whether diversity is important but instead have a developing body of literature that allows for scholarly debate regarding how to integrate multiculturalism into our research, practice, and training.

One topic that has recently received a great deal of empirical and theoretical attention is multicultural competence, and specifically, the multicultural counseling competencies (Arredondo et al., 1996; D. W. Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). While the multicultural counseling competencies outline specific ways in which counselors can integrate issues of diversity into their work with racial and ethnic minority clients, some questions have surfaced regarding their scope (Arredondo, 1999), relationship to case conceptualization (Constantine & Ladany, 2000; Ladany, Inman, Constantine, & Hofheinz, 1997), and actual counselor behavior (Fuertes, Bartolomeo, & Nichols, 2001; Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995; Sadowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Richardson, & Corey, 1998). As current and future research address these specific issues, the degree to which these competencies actually improve our

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work with racial and ethnic minority clients will be clarified. In the meantime, there exists an opportunity for counseling psychology to reexamine and expand the notion of multicultural competence.

If counseling psychology is to be committed to an agenda of multiculturalism, and there is no doubt that this commitment exists, then the field must also be committed to social justice. While D. W. Sue et al. (1998) stated that "multiculturalism is about social justice, cultural democracy, and equity" (p. 5), one could argue that issues of social justice have not yet received adequate attention in the existing operationalization of multicultural counseling competencies. This is not to say that counseling psychologists are ignoring issues of injustice in their work, because this is not the case (e.g., D'Andrea & Daniels, 1999; Helms & Cook, 1999; Parham & McDavis, 1987; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994; Thompson & Neville, 1999; Toporek & Reza, 2001). However, issues of social justice cannot be adequately addressed through counseling and psychotherapy alone (Bulhan, 1985). A social justice perspective emphasizes societal concerns, including issues of equity, self-determination, interdependence, and social responsibility (Bell, 1997). "Social justice has to do with how advantages and disadvantages are distributed to individuals in society" (Miller, 1999, p. 11). Traditionally, psychologists have been socialized into seeing themselves as apolitical, having little involvement in social justice issues except as private citizens (Brown, 1997). However, social justice is at the heart of multiculturalism in that the existence of institutionalized racism, sexism, and homophobia is what accounts for the inequitable experiences of people of color, women, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (among others) in the United States. Moreover, discrimination and prejudice are intimately connected to quality-of-life issues for these groups of people.

These are not new ideas. Feminist scholars (e.g., Brown, 1997; Rawlings & Carter, 1977; Walters, Carter, Papp, & Silverstein, 1988), among others (e.g., Martin-Baró, 1994; Prilleltensky, 1997; Ramirez, 1999), have long advocated a more political analysis of the problems of oppressed groups. Currently, counseling psychology's operationalization of multicultural competence has been focused narrowly on how, within the context of counseling, mental health professionals can work effectively with diverse clients. A broader analysis would suggest that multicultural competence cannot be limited to an awareness of cultural differences, nor can it be constrained by the contexts of one-on-one counseling. Rather, counseling psychology's operationalization of multicultural competence must be grounded in a commitment to social justice that necessitates an expansion of professional activities beyond individual counseling. Any multicultural movement that underemphasizes social justice is likely to do little to eradicate oppression and will

maintain the status quo to the detriment of historically marginalized people (Martin-Baró, 1994; Prilleltensky, 1997; Speight, 2000).

There has been little dialogue or critique of the current conceptualization of multicultural counseling competency. Indeed, the "historical definition has gone virtually unchallenged by multicultural scholars and practitioners in counseling psychology" (Constantine & Ladany, 2000, p. 162). In our view, the notion of multicultural competence must be expanded to include interventions beyond the context of counseling. Accordingly, multicultural competence includes the ability to function as a change agent at organizational, institutional, and societal levels (Ridley et al., 1994; Toporek & Reza, 2001).

The purpose of this article is as follows. First, we will examine the relationship of the current multicultural counseling competencies to social justice vis-à-vis the scope of interventions contained within them. Second, we will present definitions of social justice. Third, we will present an argument for expanding the scope of interventions beyond counseling and psychotherapy. Fourth, we will propose ways that a social justice philosophy can be integrated into teaching and research efforts. Finally, we will summarize ideas for advancing a social justice agenda in relation to multicultural competence.

### **MULTICULTURAL COUNSELING COMPETENCIES, SCOPE OF INTERVENTIONS, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE**

The multicultural counseling competencies were developed by leading scholars at the request of Thomas Parham, then president of the Association of Multicultural Counseling and Development, to provide guidelines for ethical counselor practice from multicultural and culturally specific perspectives (Arredondo, 1998; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Ottavi, 1995). The competencies articulate attitudinal and trait-based characteristics on three dimensions: counselor beliefs and attitudes, knowledge, and skills. The justification for these competencies is articulated at length by Sue et al. (1992) and Arredondo et al. (1996), noting that the counseling profession had been using White, middle-class models of human development and behavior that have failed to adequately represent the needs of historically disenfranchised communities.

The most recent iteration of the multicultural counseling competencies links specific characteristics with quantifiable criteria to allow for a more clear-cut determination of whether a counselor possesses a particular ability (e.g., being able to describe at least two models of minority identity develop-

ment and their implications for counseling) (Arredondo et al., 1996). While such specificity greatly assists clinicians, supervisors, and trainees in the demonstration of multicultural counseling competence, it has yet to be shown that these discrete abilities actually result in improved outcome for clients (Fuertes et al., 2001). Furthermore, S. Sue (1998) argued that in the case of ethnic minority populations, no rigorous research has determined if psychotherapy is truly effective.

As has been alluded to earlier, counseling is one way in which we can function as multicultural advocates, but it is certainly not the only way. The multicultural competencies focus on counselors' abilities to incorporate cultural diversity into their work within the counseling setting, yet do not articulate other professional activities or roles that might constitute multicultural competence. The 9 "counselor awareness of own cultural values and biases" competencies and 7 "counselor awareness of client worldview" competencies are general enough to be applicable to professional activities other than counseling. However, the list of 15 intervention strategies highlighted in the competencies focus almost exclusively on counseling, psychotherapy, or testing services. While this may be an appropriate agenda for professional counselors, it assumes tacitly that counseling, testing, and psychotherapy should be the primary ways in which we interact with people of color. The implication is that the problems of culturally diverse clients are best understood as intrapsychic or interpersonal ones, best treated by individual, group, or family psychotherapeutic interventions. D. W. Sue et al. (1998) attempted to broaden the focus of the competencies to include organizational development, but even this emphasis is not on systemic intervention, which would be more compatible with a social justice focus.

Social justice issues are not completely ignored by the multicultural counseling competencies. In fact, Arredondo (1999) examined the ways in which the 31 competencies serve as tools to confront oppression and racism. In her analysis, she identified 7 competencies that explicitly or implicitly articulate ways in which counselors should attend to issues of oppression. In the category that describes "counselor awareness of own cultural values and biases," counselors are expected to have knowledge of how (a) their own cultural heritage and (b) oppression, racism, discrimination, and stereotyping affects them personally and professionally (e.g., acknowledging racism and privilege in one's own life). Arredondo suggested that "the thrust is for counselors to be capable of verbalizing and analyzing their privileges and experiences as they relate to . . . forms of social and historical oppression" (p. 107).

In the category that describes competencies involving "counselors' awareness of client worldview," counselors are expected to be aware of how (c) their negative and positive reactions toward other racial and ethnic groups may prove detrimental to the counseling relationship and (d) have knowledge of

how sociopolitical influences (e.g., poverty, racism, and stereotyping) may affect the self-esteem and self-concept of racial and ethnic minority clients. The thrust of these competencies is the "criticality of knowing oneself, cognitively and emotionally, and the importance of the sociopolitical influences that affect all of us" (Arredondo, 1999, p. 108).

Within the category of "culturally appropriate intervention strategies," counselors are expected to be aware of (e) institutional barriers that prevent minorities from using mental health services and (f) have knowledge of bias in assessment procedures. Finally, counselors are told that they should (g) attend to and work to eliminate biases, prejudices, and discriminatory contexts in conducting evaluations and providing interventions. Here, Arredondo (1999) suggested that these competencies "articulate the need for counselors to be proactive on behalf of their clients, particularly in institutions that may not have practices that meet the needs of . . . diverse constituencies" (p. 108). Thus, practices within institutions that affect a client's psychological welfare should be addressed by multiculturally competent counselors.

According to Arredondo (1999), the above competencies provide explicit statements about the attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, and skills that will facilitate the recognition of oppression and racism. The competencies call for counseling professionals to have knowledge about oppression. Primarily, counselors are asked to examine themselves in terms of their own cultural background, privileges, and biases. One could argue that recognizing such issues is a good start but that oppression is not explicitly defined as a core problem that affects the psychological and physical well-being of people of color, women, gay/lesbian/bisexual, and other marginalized people. As such, some counselors may interpret this to mean that as long as they know racism exists in their lives and the lives of their clients, they will be multiculturally competent. In only two instances are institutional interventions explicitly defined as multicultural competencies. One could surmise a commitment to social justice, but it is understated in favor of a definition of multicultural competence that centers on acknowledging the ways in which oppression can be seen in professional work (via biased tests and mental health policies).

The multicultural counseling competencies do speak to issues of oppression but say little specifically about ways to advocate for social justice. Counseling professionals are encouraged to be aware of oppressive forces and to work to minimize them whenever possible, but this is not at the heart of the competencies. A multiculturally competent counselor is asked to attend to, be aware of, and develop sensitivity to issues of bias, discrimination, and oppression. This can be thought of as *mandatory ethics*, action taken to avoid breaking the rules, as contrasted with *aspirational ethics*, actions taken toward attaining the highest possible standard. Counseling professionals are not directed to advocate for the elimination of systems of oppression,

inequality, or exploitation. In failing to specifically state the ways that counseling psychologists need to confront issues of oppression, it could be assumed that it is sufficient to increase one's self-awareness and then do what one can via counseling and psychotherapy. The current form of the multicultural counseling competencies might be seen as apolitical in that they do not specifically emphasize how professionals can be agents of social change. Ironically, by not specifying precisely the need for multiculturally competent counseling professionals to work for social change, in addition to serving our clients through counseling, the multicultural counseling competencies are very political. A social justice foundation would reflect a clearer statement of values and also provide a rationale for an expansion of the professional roles required of multiculturally competent counseling professionals.

Critiques of the scope of professional practice of psychologists have been presented by several multicultural proponents. D. W. Sue (1995) concluded that counseling professionals are frequently placed in the position of treating clients who represent the aftermath of failed and oppressive policies; thus, we become trapped in the role of remediation. He argued that taking a proactive and preventative approach to addressing the cultural and institutional bases of the oppression is critical. Furthermore, Prillettensky (1997) asserted that the use of remedial therapeutic methods is morally questionable. Inherent in the remedial approach is a position of passivity; only after destructive environments have taken their toll on a person is help justified. Through its multicultural counseling competencies, the multicultural movement seems to have, perhaps inadvertently, aligned itself with the status quo. Counseling primarily seeks to change individuals rather than to change the social context and, in so doing, "joins the forces that perpetuate social injustice" (Albee, 2000a, p. 248). Counseling, by and large, is based on a remedial medical model of service delivery, whereby a problem has developed and the counselor works to ameliorate the problem. Albee (2000a) was highly critical of reliance on such a model, stating that remedial models of treatment do not seek to end the social conditions that maintain social inequality such as poverty, discrimination, exploitation, and prejudices. Because these very conditions are often major factors associated with psychological stress and emotional problems, counseling psychology could make a significant contribution to society by expanding the definition of multicultural competence.

Unfortunately, economic trends within the larger society serve to reinforce the pattern of remedial, therapy-based service delivery within which the field operates. Systemically, remediation is reinforced and proactive efforts are, at best, constrained by legal and financial barriers. Insurance companies typically do not reimburse preventative mental health services or client advocacy efforts. Moreover, there is some complicity on the part of training institutions for this state of affairs. Attempts to infuse multiculturalism

into the curricula of training programs have focused on teaching students to be culturally sensitive in therapeutic contexts. For example, training programs may require therapy practica with diverse populations or offer courses that focus on doing therapy with special populations. Given how many required courses and practica already consume students' time, it is likely that outreach, prevention, and community advocacy are left out of many curricula. There may be a belief that being active in the community or becoming familiar with community resources was somehow outside the realm of the psychologist's professional responsibility. Psychologists are assumed to "do therapy" while other mental health providers (e.g., social workers) are assumed to be responsible for case management, community-level intervention, or accessing of community resources for clients. This is not to diminish the importance of sound therapeutic skills that incorporate an understanding of diverse cultures. However, because counseling and psychotherapy only reach a small proportion of those in need, counseling professionals must expand their skills repertoire. A commitment to social justice would require redefinition of multicultural competence to include advocacy and other forms of intervention.

### DEFINING SOCIAL JUSTICE

While the concept of social justice is one that many counseling psychologists would likely support, greater ambiguity may exist vis-à-vis the question of how one integrates a commitment to social justice. Perhaps the best way to begin is to identify elements of a social justice philosophy that could provide the foundation for an expanded definition of multicultural competence. The goal of social justice is

full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure. (Bell, 1997, p. 3)

Several philosophical paradigms are instructive as one engages issues of social justice.

Concepts of liberty and equality ground most of the major paradigms of social justice (Hartnett, 2001; Stevens & Wood, 1992). Early models, such as the Libertarian Justice model of John Locke, emphasized the connection between merit and liberty (Nozick, 1974). In this context, invoking the concept of merit assumes that individuals are free to make decisions and utilize their competencies. Merit is then, in theory, directly linked to individual out-



comes (i.e., who gets what). Accordingly, the acquisition of resources need not be equitable as long as it occurs fairly and reflects what is deserved or entitled. Capitalism and meritocracy coexist with this approach to justice. Thus, gender, racial, and social class inequities within society could occur fairly as long as equal opportunity exists. There would be no requirements that government or public policy become involved in addressing such inequities. Rather, helping those who are suffering from inequities might occur through philanthropy at an individual level (e.g., volunteerism). Because group-based oppression (i.e., sexism, racism, homophobia) precludes a level playing field, other philosophers have addressed the need for institutional protection of disenfranchised groups.

A liberal reformist approach to justice, attributable to Rousseau, builds on the libertarian model but asserts that meritocracy cannot form the basis of justice and that inequity should not become structurally embedded within a society (Rawls, 1971). Thus, the optimal role of government should be to create and enforce laws that prevent gross social inequities while promoting liberty and freedom of choice. In theory, public policies would attempt to keep a level playing field by protecting the basic rights of those who have not benefited from the system. Yet one might argue that social justice cannot be legislated. In fact, a great deal of injustice (past and present) has occurred within the confines of the law (e.g., racially segregated educational systems and dismantling of bilingual education). An extreme extension of this idea is represented by the Socialist approach to justice, commonly associated with Marx (cited in Stevens & Wood, 1992). In this model, society should be structured in a way that guarantees equality, even at the expense of personal freedoms. Only after a commitment to justice and equity is instilled within the populace can freedom of choice be encouraged in society. Modern social justice theorists have criticized these models based on their emphasis on outcome (i.e., the distribution of resources) rather than processes that guide decisions related to social equality (Young, 1990).

This latter approach to social justice embraced by several contemporary social justice scholars is referred to as a communitarian model of justice or deliberative justice (Heller, 1987; Young, 1990). In this model of social justice, the process of decision making and interaction that occurs at an individual and systemic level, as opposed to the actual distribution of resources, is the focus. In Young's (1990) conceptualization of social justice, social organization and processes are evaluated to elucidate practices of domination, privilege, and oppression. Thus, inequities are not solved by merely redistributing wealth or resources. Rather, the processes that facilitated unequal outcomes to begin with must be scrutinized and transformed. Typically, marginalization is the main process by which social injustice is maintained.

Young argued that in the United States, a large proportion of the population is expelled from full participation in social life, including people of color, the elderly, the disabled, women, gay men, lesbians, bisexual people, and people who are involuntarily out of work. Thus, issues of social justice are important for the statistical majority of the population, not just minority groups. Such a conceptualization of justice, then, is logically related to issues of multiculturalism and diversity. Prilleltensky (1997) argued that human diversity cannot flourish without notions of justice and equality.

Several prominent psychologists have articulated the connection between social justice, underserved populations, and the profession of psychology in recent years (Albee, 2000a; Helms & Cook, 1999; Martin-Baró, 1994; Prilleltensky, 1997; Ramirez, 1999). Martin-Baró (1994) discussed liberation psychology as one that focuses “not on what has been done [to people] but what needs to be done” (p. 6). In other words, a social justice-informed psychologist seeks to transform the world, not just understand the world. This transformation, however, would necessitate an expansion of current training methods. According to Martin-Baró, it would necessitate the acquisition of a “consciousness that will permit us to go beyond the limits imposed by our socialization and the boundaries set by our professional fields” (p. 16). Martin-Baró urged that psychological knowledge be used to construct a society where liberation of all peoples is the goal. Prilleltensky (1997) suggested that distributive justice should be one of the main values that guides psychologists’ conceptualization of the “good life” (i.e., psychological well-being). He argued, as did Martin-Baró (1994), that psychologists perpetuate injustice by overfocusing on individual factors to explain social behavior, which abstracts the individual from important sociohistorical contexts.

While this brief overview of social justice philosophies is in no way meant to be exhaustive, the principal ideas and emphases of the models have implications for the ways in which counseling psychologists might embrace social justice professionally. In particular, the emphasis on oppression, privilege, social inequities, and social justice has direct implications for the conceptualization of multicultural competence. Many counseling psychologists may engage in acts of justice personally and professionally through donating their time and services or working in agencies/organizations that provide services to underserved populations. Politically, many counseling psychologists may be inclined to support and advocate for policies that are designed to level the playing field (e.g., affirmative action, immigration amnesty, domestic partner rights and benefits). However, the communitarian model of justice, based on collective decision making and community empowerment, perhaps holds the most promise for how counseling psychologists could provide services, conduct research, and engage students in a way that promotes social justice.

### EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF INTERVENTIONS BEYOND COUNSELING

As counseling psychologists, we can take a lesson from Humphreys's (1996) critical analysis of the process by which psychotherapy became central to the specialty of clinical psychology. Humphreys argued that the capital gains associated with psychotherapy lured clinical psychology into an underemphasis on preventative interventions and sociocommunity conceptualizations of human behavior. If the objective is to use psychological knowledge to promote human welfare, one must open the "universe of alternatives" that includes revisiting the benefits of larger scale interventions and prevention efforts. According to Humphreys, "Psychologists can more effectively benefit society by making long-term commitments to improving social institutions (e.g., public schools) and social policy than they can by doing psychotherapy" (p. 195). Fortunately for counseling psychologists, prevention and development have always formed the foundation of our specialty. Frankly, a shift in emphasis would require little more than reclaiming our historical roots (Albee, 2000b; Romano & Hage, 2000; Vera, 2000). In fact, counseling psychology's emphasis on person-environment interaction, building on strengths, psychoeducational and developmental interventions, and viewing people holistically provides an advantageous position from which a meaningful synthesis of social justice and professional practice can occur.

Counseling professionals can provide a wide variety of direct and indirect services to clients. Traditional remedial counseling informed by communitarian justice might rely on collaborative models of change such as those informed by feminist and systems theories. In these models, the counselor is a participant in the change process, but the client is directly involved in and responsible for the direction and outcome of therapy. This approach can inform therapy whether it be with individuals, families, or groups. Communitarian justice-driven therapies would also include conceptualizing oppression as having direct consequences for mental health. Omitting discussions of oppression and overemphasizing individual determination in therapy would be seen as maintaining the status quo (Prilleltensky, 1997). Prilleltensky argued that personal adjustment interventions must be supplemented with interventions informed by communitarian approaches to social justice. Such emancipatory approaches would seek to promote a balance between self-determination and distributive justice; promote mutuality, social obligation, and removal of oppression as key elements of a just society; conceptualize problems as resulting from interpersonal and social oppression; use interventions that change individuals and social systems; and promote a sense of community and emancipation of all people. These objectives

are best met by engaging in proactive (i.e., preventive) interventions directed toward social systems, institutions, and individuals.

Direct services other than therapy, such as advocacy, outreach, prevention programs, and psychoeducational interventions, would be a priority in multiculturally competent, communitarian social-justice-based practice. Prevention and remediation are not mutually exclusive activities for professionals—it is possible to incorporate both approaches to service delivery. Fortunately, several scholars have developed models of multicultural service delivery that are instructive for expanding professional roles in the service of oppressed communities (Atkinson, Thompson, & Grant, 1993; Lewis, Lewis, Daniels, & D'Andrea, 1998). Community outreach, facilitating indigenous support networks, advocacy, and public policy making could very well be a more important way to contribute to social change.

Atkinson et al. (1993) presented a model for such professional integration including outreach work, consultation, facilitation of self-help or indigenous support, and community advocacy as viable alternatives to psychotherapy. Their proposed three-dimensional model provided a blueprint for making decisions about which role might be most useful to any given racial or ethnic minority client. Several factors are considered in determining which professional role or activity is most appropriate to the needs of the client: locus of problem etiology, level of client acculturation, and goals of the intervention. A consideration of these three factors determines in what capacity a counselor can best respond to a client. For example, if a highly acculturated client were suffering from a sleep disorder, traditional therapy within a traditional counseling setting (e.g., a hospital or clinic) might be appropriate and compatible with the client's worldview. Relaxation techniques or medication might bring the client symptom relief. However, if a recent immigrant client were illegally fired from a job, a counselor's response might be very different. In this case, one might initially focus on crisis intervention to avoid a financial disaster that would leave the client and the client's children homeless. Addressing the injustice of the situation and the violation of the law would be equally critical to helping this client. As such, the counselor might be of most help by helping the client activate services that provide emergency aid and identifying free legal assistance to protect the client's rights. According to the three-dimensional model, a counselor adjusts his or her role to the needs of the client. In essence, the planes and intersections of the three dimensions create eight major roles for counselors working with culturally diverse clients: adviser, advocate, self-help group facilitator, facilitator of indigenous support and healing systems, consultant, change agent, counselor, and psychotherapist. Most counseling psychologists are familiar with the latter two roles.

Another model that addresses the importance of role flexibility and issues of social justice was articulated by Lewis et al. (1998). They emphasized many of the direct client service roles outlined in Atkinson et al.'s (1993) model (e.g., counseling and outreach) and described indirect client service roles such as consulting and working to influence public policy. Lewis et al. (1998) identified other roles that are targeted at the community in general rather than at a particular client. These roles would include advocate, psychoeducator, or collaborator with community leaders (e.g., ministers and folk healers). The needs of the client determine which services are utilized and consequently which roles would be most beneficial. Several of these roles (i.e., facilitator of indigenous support, consultant, and advocate) require professionals to be familiar with and active in the communities within which their clients reside.

Social workers have also been trained with models that emphasize the importance of community-based work and services other than psychotherapy to enhance clients' quality of life (Mather & Lager, 2000). For example, social work models of service delivery typically emphasize supportive interventions such as respite care, homemaker services, mutual aid groups (self-help), and other wraparound services. The philosophy guiding social work's commitment to such approaches, including public policy change, is "In order to offset the negative and reinforce the positive effects of societal issues, it is important for social workers to gain greater knowledge of societal issues and develop skills in advocacy, negotiation, organization, and policy implementation" (Mather & Lager, 2000, p. 19). Counseling psychologists could expand their scope and broaden their multicultural competence by becoming familiar with the aforementioned models of service delivery. In addition, counseling psychology has unique contributions to make in working broadly to promote social justice due to its traditional emphases on person-environment interaction, sociocultural bases of human development, and strengths promotion.

Many other scholars have asserted the need for macrolevel interventions, especially in working with women and people of color. Thompson and Neville (1999) argued that the effects of racism on the mental health of people of color warrants a commitment to social interventions as well as therapeutic processes. Apfelbaum (1999), Rawlings and Carter (1977), and Walters et al. (1988) have been vocal proponents of proactively eradicating sexism. D'Andrea and Daniels (2000) and Helms and Cook (1999) have been leaders in calling for a commitment to fight racism and expose White privilege. Parham and McDavis (1987) emphasized the importance of counselors working to help individuals become empowered to change their behaviors and relationships and becoming environmental change agents. Toporek and Reza (2001) argued that advocacy and policy-making roles are critical to

multicultural competence. Hence, there is growing support for a refocusing of the scope of professional practice in counseling psychology.

The process of determining the appropriateness of various interventions would also need to be a collaborative endeavor. The ability to design, implement, and evaluate community interventions that promote community empowerment would be a critical element in multicultural competence. Working in partnerships to harness the strengths within a given community, a fundamental value of counseling psychology, is a key requirement of any successful community-based program (Reiss & Price, 1996). If the focus is strictly deficit based, and community members are seen as being helpless to the effects of social inequities, multiple problems result. First, a paternalistic relationship between the service providers and the community members will exist, which is the antithesis of empowerment. Second, it is difficult to inspire the hope, motivation, and creativity necessary in enacting social justice, for both professionals and community members, if one focuses on what is not present.

Identifying community strengths results in empowerment because solutions reside within the community itself and change comes about from partnerships. Accordingly, community members will not be treated as needing outsiders to come in and solve their problems. Rather, the professional's expertise may be better applied by helping to organize (e.g., encouraging the creation of or joining with grass-roots community organizations) or advocate (e.g., facilitating contacts with community leaders, policy makers, legislators, etc.) within the community. Such efforts may require counseling professionals to use their skills in group facilitation, needs assessment, and program evaluation. Additionally, as counseling psychologists move into more administrative positions (e.g., community mental health center director), there will be opportunities to advocate for an expansion of roles and various forms of service delivery, thus legitimizing more innovative ways of advocating for marginalized communities.

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE, RESEARCH, AND TEACHING**

While a commitment to social justice will involve developing and delivering interventions in one's work, there is also an important role that the creation and dissemination of knowledge through research must play. Prilleltensky (1997) argued that knowledge should be a tool of social action. Research informed by communitarian social justice would necessarily be collaborative, action oriented, and socially relevant. Instead of focusing solely on knowledge for knowledge's sake or knowledge that is only important to other researchers, there would be an emphasis on research that is

applied and is relevant to the community. Examples of such research are not a rarity in counseling psychology. Some of this research might focus on the assessment of needs or impact of public policies within particular communities or populations, the development and evaluation of programs that respond to community needs, or survey research that has direct policy implications. Research would need to reflect communitarian social justice values in content and process. Reducing the distance between psychological experts and research participants will result in more meaningful participation of the consumers of psychology. Therefore, research participants should aid in the articulation of meaningful questions that have direct connections to their lives.

Whitmore's (1998) Transformative Participatory Evaluation research model is based on the premise that stakeholder participation in evaluation research increases the relevance, ownership, and utilization of research with a purpose of policy planning and organizational decision making. Furthermore, this approach to research has the democratization of social change efforts at its core. Whitmore's model is heavily informed by the ideologies of psychologists in developing nations, most notably Latin America, who argued that psychological science had become too detached from urgent social and economic problems (Fals-Borda, 1985; Freire, 1990; Martin-Baró, 1994).

In Transformative Participatory Evaluation research, the primary goal of science is political empowerment, emancipation, and social justice for marginalized communities. There is an extensive participation of the community stakeholders who stand to gain or lose the most from the research endeavor. Issues of disempowerment in the community are directly addressed in the research design, as are ethical issues involving power and authority of the researchers, ownership of data, and the use of research findings. Because Transformative Participatory Evaluation research is concerned with promoting social action for change and with transforming power relations to empower the marginalized, the process is necessarily political and cannot be objective or neutral. This may be viewed by many to be contradictory to the tenets and goals of traditional psychological science. However, as scholars such as Prilleltensky (1997) have argued, traditional research has never been value free. Thus, because values necessarily accompany scholarship, counseling psychologists should be explicit about aligning with values that promote social justice, liberation, and community empowerment. This is particularly necessary of counseling psychologists conducting research with a multicultural agenda. Again, such a shift would constitute a serious transformation for the way the next generation of counseling psychology scholars are educated.

To deliver research findings to policy makers, the dissemination of research would need to be expanded to sources other than professional jour-



nals. The findings and implications of research would need to be presented directly to the research participants, community leaders, and/or policy makers who can use the findings to intervene at the community level. In addition, nontraditional written outlets for professional work might include popular publications (e.g., parenting magazines), community newsletters, and possibly, where no written outlets exist, the creation of such material (e.g., developing pamphlets to be distributed in health clinics, schools, or parent groups). If the profession were to successfully shift the focus and process of research to include more socially relevant investigations, professionals other than those in the academy might be more inspired to integrate research into their roles as practitioners.

One way of integrating a commitment to social justice into counseling psychology is through the training of the next generation of counseling professionals. In the work of teachers, communitarian social justice can be applied to our methods and content. bell hooks (1994) discussed the importance of sharing responsibility for the learning process with the learner. In this approach, the professor is the leader of the experience but the students cocreate the atmosphere and context within which learning occurs. hooks discussed the importance of this for transforming students from being passive learners to active participants who are responsible to themselves and their classmates for the quality of their education. Thus, student empowerment is one outcome of adopting a communitarian philosophy. Education as a means of liberation has been discussed at length (Counts, 1978; Dewey, 1916; Freire, 1990; Stevens & Wood, 1992).

Few studies have attempted to understand the process of transforming psychologists' commitments to social justice issues in their work. D'Andrea and Daniels (1999) described various dispositions that White counseling psychologists, trainees, and other professionals possessed regarding their understanding of racism. Most of their research participants were found to possess a liberal disposition that is characterized by an openness to talking about racism but an overall sense of apathy about it (i.e., an absence of anger, urgency, or expressed concern). A lack of antiracist action was associated with this disposition. In contrast, research participants who had a principled activist disposition (less than 1% of the sample) demonstrated a more abstract and systematic understanding of cycles of oppression and the various individual, institutional, and cultural changes needed to eradicate racism. These individuals were characterized as social/political activists who consciously worked to empower marginalized populations. Unfortunately, these same individuals reported a general lack of support for their efforts by their colleagues, administrators, and the profession in general. Based on these findings, it is clear that a great deal of work remains to socialize the next generation of counseling psychologists to ground their work in social justice.



The process of encouraging students to embrace a commitment to social justice in their future professional work is discussed by Buckley (1998). Buckley maintained that education infused with social justice and humanitarianism should produce a student who is characterized by three qualities. The first quality is an affective dimension of social justice: The student should have a sensitivity to injustice and innocent suffering in the world. Typically, an examination of injustice is what yields this sensitivity. This awareness, however, is not sufficient to ensuring the transformation process. Many students are aware of injustice and only pity those who suffer as a result.

The second quality is an intellectual dimension of justice: The student should know the causes/conditions that cause and perpetuate human suffering (i.e., understanding theories of oppression and liberation). This understanding is critical to motivating the student to engage in work that tries to change these conditions (discussed in further detail by Goodman, 2001). The third quality is the pragmatic or volitional dimension of justice: The student must learn tools and skills that will allow him or her to effectively intervene and, in doing so, contribute to a vision of social justice. This last component is important to address because often students who engage in working with underserved communities, via practicum or research endeavors, leave the experience feeling disillusioned, burned out, or overwhelmed by the enormity of problems that exist in their clients. However, one could argue that this is a result of being trained to rely on individual-level interventions such as therapy as the primary tool of change. Even when therapy is effective, its power is limited by the necessity of helping people one at a time. If students were taught to think more broadly about their potential roles as professionals, they would be in a better position to intervene at multiple levels for clients and communities.

One way to encourage such a broadening is to offer courses that have a direct focus on alternative roles (e.g., courses in outreach, consultation) or by infusing into existing course work the service-based learning experiences that rely on alternative roles. For example, a career development class might provide students with an opportunity to go into community colleges or local high schools and deliver programs aimed at developing career decision-making skills and opportunities in students. A research methods class might allow students to access archival data and then develop papers with clear policy implications that demonstrate interpretation skills and application of information to real problems. Human diversity classes might study theories of oppression but also have students engage in a service-based volunteer experience (e.g., tutoring, working in a homeless shelter) that not only would allow them to participate in grassroots programs but also would give them some experience in learning the administrative and political aspects of such programs.

### **MULTICULTURAL COMPETENCE: ADVANCING A SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA**

Given that the empirical support for the multicultural counseling competencies has not yet matched the enthusiasm with which they have been adopted by the field, it is necessary that counseling professionals take the time to think critically about the future agenda for multicultural competence. In essence, it is important that the definition of multicultural competence be scrutinized. According to S. Sue (1998), cultural competence requires not only appreciation and recognition of cultural groups but an ability to be effective. To articulate the processes involved in developing competence, it must be clear what effectiveness means. Identifying effective multicultural interventions, broadly speaking, will undoubtedly require dialogue with the clients and communities, the ultimate consumers of psychological services. The result of such dialogue might be the realization that clients need more than counseling and that communities need services other than remedial interventions. Articulating a comprehensive, social-justice-based definition of multicultural competence should include a consumer-driven component, developed collaboratively with all of the stakeholders.

It is important that the field move from a microlevel to a macrolevel analysis of issues of multicultural competence. This would result in an agenda that goes beyond individual interventions due to its grounding in social justice. Multicultural competency centered on principles of social justice would require counseling psychologists to think systemically about the nature of psychological dysfunction and health. Intrapsychic models of human functioning are insufficient to explain the effects of oppression, poverty, and other social ills. Consequently, families, communities, and society-at-large would be major foci of our conceptualizations and interventions.

An additional element of multicultural competence within a social justice framework is the development and application of critical thinking skills and critical consciousness (Freire, 1990). Critical thinking is essential in analyzing the social conditions and policies that maintain injustices and circumscribe the lives of oppressed people. Critical consciousness is important in the development of self-awareness for counseling psychologists who must learn to be aware of their own social statuses, privileges, and cultural identities. But awareness is not enough. Multicultural competence, when grounded in social justice, necessitates a commitment to praxis, "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1990, p. 33). Multicultural competence is most relevant to members of oppressed communities to the extent that it is grounded in a social justice agenda seeking to eradicate oppression. The work one engages in for social justice would occur not only when "being psychologists"; rather, such work would be required in the com-

munities where one lives and works. This process of critical self-examination, when combined with an examination of social conditions and policies, ultimately leads to a personal and professional commitment to social change.

In this position article, we have attempted to outline some critical aspects of multicultural competency that had not been well articulated by the existing competencies given their emphasis on counseling. Without an explicit emphasis on ending oppression, counselors may misconceptualize (or underemphasize) major determinants of (and therefore solutions to) problems that compromise the well-being of marginalized communities. Furthermore, we have invited the field to reconsider the focus of multicultural competencies and suggested a definition that is centered on social justice. This definition would contextualize the need for multicultural competencies as being a function of an unhealthy society. Such an expanded definition of multicultural competence requires a concomitant expansion of our roles as counseling psychologists. Only future scholarship and lively debate will determine the longevity of the current version of the multicultural counseling competencies. As multicultural advocates and counseling psychologists, we should be aspirational in our hopes and efforts. As leading advocates of multicultural competence within the profession of psychology, other specialties will no doubt be observing our efforts. Thus, the agenda we set will likely be influential beyond our field. Yet, in addition to the obvious benefits to the profession as a whole, it is our clients and marginalized communities who stand to benefit the most from our mission. Identifying the philosophies and professional roles that will most effectively promote the healthy development and well-being of oppressed groups is our ethical and moral obligation.

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